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Message Text

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PAGE 01 ANTANA 00105 210739Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 OES-07 CIAE-00 INR-07
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E.O. 11652$ N/A
TAGS: SPOP, MA
SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR'S POPULATION POLICY

1. SUMMARY. WHILE MADAGASCAR HAS YET TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE POPULATION POLICY, THERE ARE SEVERAL INDICATIONS THAT ITS LEADERS RECOGNIZE THAT CONTINUED HIGH POPULATION GROWTH (ABOUT 2.6 PERCENT) IS A HINDRANCE TO ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES. THIS SLOW EVOLUTION OF GOVERNMENT THINKING IS FRAGILE AND COULD EASILY BE RESERVED. END SUMMARY.

2. MADAGASCAR'S POPULATION POLICY IS STILL IN A VERY EARLY STAGE. THERE EXISTS A SMALL BUT ACTIVE FAMILY PLANNING ORGANIZATION AS WELL AS A SMALL OFFICE OF PLANNING & STATISTICS IN THE MINISTRY OF POPULATION WHICH CONCERNS ITSELF WITH POPULATION POLICY MATTERS. HOWEVER, NEITHER OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS IS PERMITTED TO PROMOTE ANYTHING MORE THAN PARENTAL EDUCATION ON FAMILY PLANNING ON A VERY SMALL SCALE. STILL THERE ARE SEVERAL IMPROVEMENTS OVER THE SITUATION DURING THE TIME OF PRESIDENT TSIRANANA (1960/72) WHEN HE ACTIVELY PROMOTED FURTHER POPULATION OF MADAGASCAR ON THE GROUNDS THAT ITS GROSS POPULATION DENSITY IS ACTUALLY VERY SMALL, IGNORING THE HARD FACT THAT THE POPULATION PER EASILY-ARABLE LAND IS QUITE HIGH.

3. RECENTLY, THERE HAVE BEEN SOME SMALL INDICATIONS THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS BECOMING AWARE OF THE IMPENDIMENT TO ECONOMIC
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DEVELOPMENT CAUSED BY POPULATION GROWTH, AND SOME MOVEMENT TOWARDS AN EVOLVING POPULATION POLICY: A) IN AUG 77, THE FAMILY PLANNING ORGANIZATION CITED PARA 2 ABOVE RECEIVED GOVERNMENT EXEMPTION FOR IMPORT TAXES FOR MEDICINE AND EQUIPMENT. B) THE NEW INCOME TAX LAW RECENTLY ANNOUNCED, BUT NOT YET PUBLISHED, REMOVES SOME OF THE FORMER REDUCTIONS IN TAXES GRANTED TO TAX PAYERS FOR EACH DEPENDENT CHILD. WHEN ASKED IF THIS MEANT THE

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GOVERNMENT WAS PROMOTING REDUCTION OF POPULATION GROWTH, THE MINISTER OF FINANCE & PLAN REPLIED THAT THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN A COUPLE HAS IS PURELY THE CHOICE OF THAT COUPLE AND NOT A MATTER FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO DECIDE.

4. AS EMPHASIZED ABOVE, THESE DEVELOPMENTS ARE NO MORE THAN TENTATIVE FIRST STEPS TOWARD FULL GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION OF THE POPULATION GROWTH PROBLEM. THESE STEPS COULD EASILY BE REVERSED AND THEREFORE SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TO REPRESENT MORE THAN THEIR FACE VALUE. SMITH

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